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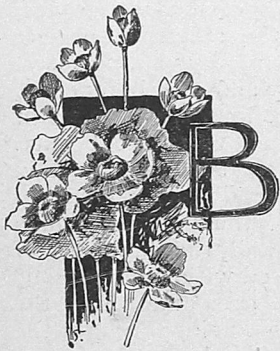
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## DECORATION OF WALLS.

BY CANDACE WHEELER, IN *The Outlook*.

ACK of all our practice in the art of making our houses beautiful there are fixed and solid principles to be considered, and these principles are reasons founded upon and governed by facts. If we neglect or ignore these independent facts, we miss the lasting enjoyment which follows well-founded decoration.

The power of making those things beautiful which exist primarily for convenience and use is one of the distinctions and privi-

leges of art; and nowhere is it more necessary or potent than in its effect upon the walls of our houses.

Walls are, of course, one of the first necessities of civilization. They give space for personal privacy, and for that reserve of the individual which is the earliest effect of the growth of thought. But, in spite of their necessity, there is in them something of restraint to the eye and to the sense which is not altogether agreeable. Limitation of space, confinement within given limits, is, on the whole, repugnant to either the natural or the civilized man, and for this reason we are constantly tempted to disguise the limit and to cover the wall in such a way as shall interest and make us forget our bounds.

ments—something, anything, which will disguise a distasteful fact and make it masquerade as a luxury.

As I have said, it is one of the privileges and opportunities of art to invent these subterfuges, and to do it so thoroughly and successfully as to content and please us with facts which would otherwise be disagreeable. And we do, by these various devices, make our walls so hospitable to our thoughts that we take positive and constant pleasure in them.

We do this chiefly, perhaps, by ministering to our instinctive love of color, for color is to many temperaments like food to the hungry: it satisfies as insistent a demand of the mind as food does to the body.

At this late period of the world we are the inheritors of many methods of wall disguise, from the Oriental weavings, or the shawl coverings with which our nomadic forefathers lined the walls of their tents, or the arras which in later days covered the roughness and rudeness of the stone walls of kings and barons, to the pictured tapestries of later centuries. This latter achievement of art manufacture has outlived and far outweighed the others in value, because it more perfectly performs the object of its creation.

Tapestries, for the most part, offer us a semblance of nature, and cheat us with a sense of unlimited horizon. The older tapestries give us, with this, suggestions of human life and action in out-of-door scenes sufficiently unrealistic to offer a vague dream of existence in fields and forests. This effectually diverts our minds from the bounds of our individual or family space, and allows us the freedom of nature.

Probably the true secret of the never-failing appreciation



BEDCHAMBER IN THE BYZANTINE STYLE, IN THE PALAZZA PALLAVICINI, MILAN. DESIGNED BY PROFESSOR SCROSATI.

It is this instinct to substitute something which will divert us from the thought of our confines that makes us hang our walls with pictures, or cover them with textiles, or with paper which carries design, or even to color them with pig-

ments of tapestries—from the very beginning of their history until to-day—is this fact of their suggestiveness, since we find that damasks of silk or velvet or other costly weavings, although far surpassing tapestries in texture, and

always in consolidation of color, yet, lacking their suggestiveness to the mind, can never rival them in the estimation of the world. Unhappily, we cannot count veritable tapestries as a modern recourse in wall-treatment, since the earlier ones are precluded from general use by their scarcity and costliness, and those which are modern, not only by reason of costliness, but also by inappropriateness of design. Undoubtedly there might be effective substitutes produced at moderate cost, which would be appropriate, not only in design, but to modern conditions as well; but, so far, all modern substitutes or imitations of tapestry follow the picture rather than the landscape idea, and present us with figure compositions after modern paintings, than which nothing could be less adapted to the purpose.

Of course, to the rich nothing is impossible, and where suitable tapestries are not obtainable, mural paintings by competent artists or skillful tintings in dyes and stains upon canvas produce the same impression and nearly the same effect. It should be remembered, however, that these effects are more suitable to the *general* rooms of the family—the halls, dining-room and library—than to drawing-rooms, where the luxury and glitter of furniture and pictures demand something more in accord with their artificiality.

For rooms of fashion and social performance nothing can be more beautiful than the various silken hangings

and harbored them—an over-payment for scant hospitality, which enriches us with beauty.

Tapestries and brocades are inheritances from the past—the inventions of days when the brains of the world were taxed to supply the wants and please the fancies of princes and nobles; the days when other humanity was, perforce, contented with the ugliness of poverty and the bareness of privation. But the brains of to-day are busy with the wants of the million, and must work, not only to create beauty, but to create it for all, so that even the poor can have it in certain measure in their domestic surroundings. We cannot surpass, indeed, we can hardly equal, the methods which produced the tapestries of Flanders and the brocades of Italy and France; we must be contented with having made architecture and its accessories fit the great masses of the world far more comfortably, and with having brought the simple and easy refinements of life within the reach of even the laborers of the world.

One of the steps which mark this tendency of modern centuries is shown in manufactures of much beauty and so little cost as to be easily attainable by the masses; and among them the production of paper-hangings for walls must rank as one of the most important. It would be difficult to substitute anything more generally appropriate to interior effects and modern conditions of life, since its range of quality is so wide as to fit all circumstances, and in



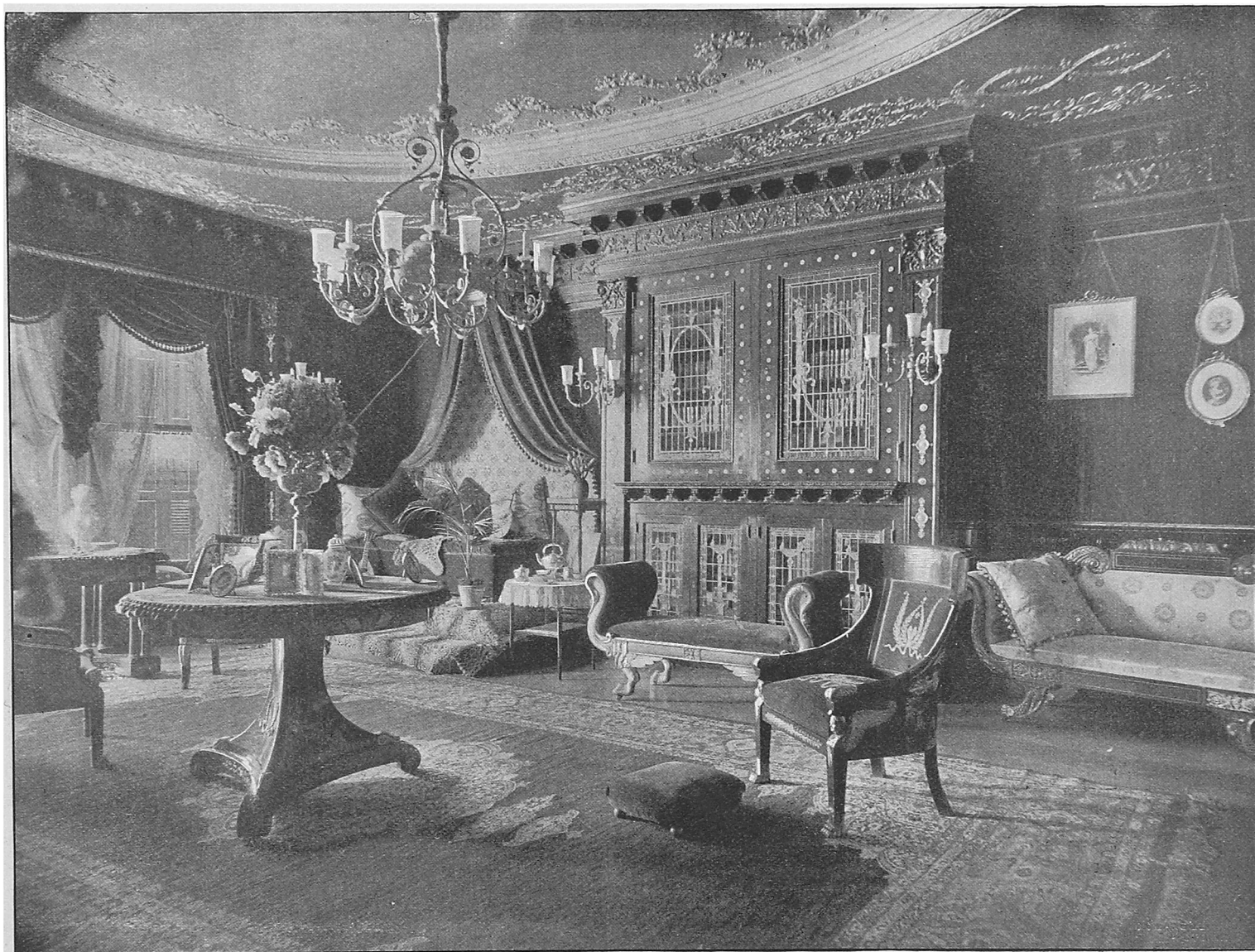
DINING-ROOM IN A NEW YORK RESIDENCE. DECORATED BY THE ROBERT GRAVES CO.

and wonderful brocades which charm the eye with color and reflections. These webs, woven from threads whose inherent brilliancy makes them a part of the world's luxury, are a legacy bequeathed by worms to the earth which has fed

a certain way to equalize the advantages of money, making beauty possible to those who have little as well as those who have much. It has imitated, mechanically, the work of the decorative painter, until the homes of the moderately

rich and the extravagantly rich are not so far apart in aspect; and, indeed, domestic art is more indebted to its manufacture than is easily understood. Still, it is to wall-papers that we owe most of the disturbing and mistaken

tion of particles rather than union of them, the eye performing the process of blending, and in this way giving a curious variety of effect in *one color*, something corresponding to the vibration of one tone in sound.



LIBRARY IN RESIDENCE OF MR. H. BRAMHALL GILBERT, 826 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK. EXECUTED BY THE LINSPAR DECORATING CO.  
HENRY F. KILBURN, ARCHT.

decoration of our walls. The largest proportion of it is too demonstrative, too insistent for proper wall-treatment, and it not infrequently makes us more conscious of the walls themselves than if they were left in their original blankness.

Sometimes, in a badly papered room, one feels as if the interior were alive with motion. Bunches of flowers seem to start out from every plane of surface, making it impossible to dodge them; or zigzag forms writhe in platoons along the walls, until the unhappy occupant might almost as well be struggling with a nightmare.

All this is a result of ignorance of principles. Instead of making the wall almost disappear from one's sight or consciousness in a pleasant vision of color, or of using it as a screen to carry vaguely agreeable suggestions of beautiful form—as if something pleasant had been placed there at will—it becomes a perfect misery of commercial invention.

Often the unlucky householder does not know why he suffers under this infliction, and it is only by the education of unrest that he learns to shun the strongly-colored, strongly-printed, ignorantly-designed wall-paper. A comparatively recent manufacture called "ingrain paper" has done much to mitigate and improve modern wall-papers. It is without design, which is often a relief, and appears in soft and pleasant tints produced upon the principle that gives value to "impressionist" methods of painting—the mixing of two differently colored pulps closely together, so that, although they apparently form one tint, it is the result of juxtaposi-

A paper which has this quality is not only agreeable to the eye, but, being to all intents and purposes a plain surface, makes a good background for pictures as well. Upon the walls of bedrooms, where pictures are not so much a matter of course, design in wall-paper may be of great value in giving variety instead of monotony of effect, provided always that there is in it a *general* diffusion of color instead of a violent separation of it. If the tints are soft enough to melt into each other naturally, or if the design is printed in two tones of the same color, making simply an access or diminution of the same tint—and these accesses appear in graceful and pleasing form—the walls become a pleasant barrier to the eye, and, although bounding and limiting the view, offer an agreeable substitute for distance.

It would be beyond the intention of this paper to go into the subject of *design* in wall-coverings, although, undoubtedly, the character of the design has much to do with its effect upon the eye and the mind. What is chiefly to be considered is how to transform a barrier into a pleasant limit instead of a disagreeable one, and there are many ways of doing this.

Wall-paper is the common and usual expedient, but there are other wall-coverings which fit their several places happily and give variety of surface and novelty of effect. Canvases of hemp or cotton, coarsely woven, and with or without decoration or applied color, are among the successful expedients, as a coarse surface of this kind is rendered

agreeable by the minute particles of light and shadow produced by the crossing of the threads. These bits of light and shade give the mixed tint of which I have before spoken, and which is almost better in certain rooms than design. Flat straw weavings, and interlacings of thin strips of wood—both of Chinese manufacture—are beautiful in color and surface. But, leaving out every application of material



and depending upon color alone, it is possible so to treat our walls as to make them pleasant and restful to our senses, and a friendly instead of an unfriendly influence.

Sleeping-rooms, bathrooms, and rooms which are or should be subject to frequent applications of water, must, of course, have walls treated only with oil paint; and this is generally an unsympathetic treatment, since a hard and shining surface is apt to result from its use. Having these natural disadvantages, it follows that much more thought and care should be given to the manner of its use than when water color—which is naturally soft in effect—is applied.

There is no reason, however, why, even in rooms which are subject to constant scrubbing, the oil color should not be used in two tones, with design in stencil, thus producing exactly the effect of a paper printed in monochrome.

I have seen a room so skillfully treated in fine stencil-work in two pale tones of blue that it was like a piece of beautiful old porcelain, and yet it was quite able to bear a weekly scrubbing if the necessity for it existed.

But, whatever method of wall decoration is chosen, the two principles of pleasantness of color and suggestiveness of design will save one from the mistakes which are apt to follow uneducated, or inexperienced decoration. To be constantly reminded of the wall as a wall, as a solid piece of masonry, is what one must avoid; and yet we must also remember that it is quite as possible and almost as instinctive for us to make the wall beautiful as for the pearl-oyster to spread its shell with opalescent nacre.

#### AN EMPIRE LIBRARY IN A NEW YORK RESIDENCE.

THE library in the residence of Mr. H. Bramhall Gilbert, of this city, shown on page 75, is one of the best examples of the Empire style, and the decorators, The Linspar Decorating Company, of this city, are to be congratulated upon this noteworthy achievement, both in the decorations as well as the various appointments of the apartment. There is evidence of a scholarly study of the style in question, and the result is one that places the decorative firm referred to in the front rank of American decorators. The woodwork is in mahogany with brass decorations in ormolu finish. The bookcase is a grandiose conception, the doors having panels of leaded glass with opalescent ornaments on a crackled background, the classic torch and wreath being conspicuous motives. In one corner of the apartment is shown a divan standing on a raised dais, the steps of the dais being covered with a rug of leopard skin. There is a canopy over the divan, which is formed of the same cardinal velour which covers the side walls, and is lined with a magnificent brocade in cream and gold. The Empire table in the centre of the apartment is a model of the style both in design and enrichment. The Linspar Decorating Company have manifested themselves in particular on the frieze and ceiling decorations, which are of Linspar relief throughout. The floor is laid in oak parquetry, on which is spread a magnificent Persian rug.

#### DECORATIVE NOTE.

THERE is quite a fashion in the use of body Brussels rugs—that is to say, rectangular carpets made of body Brussels with the border sewn on. This method of floor decoration is not nearly so desirable as the use of a rug woven in one piece, or an Oriental rug which has of late become so cheap as to be within the reach of people possessed of the most moderate means. The Jap jute rug for bedrooms is, for the price, the most artistic floor-covering in the market. In buying carpets and draperies it is better to buy the best goods in any given grade, if for no other reason than that they will retain their color without fading for a



A LOUIS XVI. SUITE. BY THE STICKLEY & SIMONDS CO., OF SYRACUSE, N. Y.

much longer period than the cheaper goods. The low-priced goods are made in imitation of the high-priced, and when first purchased will appear to be as good as the most costly fabrics; but the material used is inferior in quality and the dyes are certainly more prone to fade.